

Message Text

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PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 IO-10 NIC-01 OMB-01

EB-07 /084 W

----- 024371

R 141631Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7232

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: "DIE ZEIT" ARTICLE ON ASSESSMENT OF DOMESTIC
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: 1. IN A THOUGHTFUL ARTICLE FOR
"DIE ZEIT" JAN 10 "FEAR BEFORE THE HURRICANE: A
HARD YEAR FOR THE COALITION," ROLF ZUNDEL DESCRIBED
THE PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION
AND DISMISSES SOME OF THE SPECULATION ABOUT
POSSIBLE CHANGES (E.G., A SPECIAL ELECTION, GRAND
COALITION, FDP-CDU COALITION).

2. ZUNDEL BEGINS THE ARTICLE BY CITING THE TWO MAJOR
TESTS THE COALITION WILL FACE IN L975: THE STATE OF
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THE ECONOMY AND THE FIVE LAENDER ELECTIONS, ESPECIALLY

NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA (NRW). THE PROBLEM, HE WRITES, IS COMPLICATED BY TIMING, THAT IS, ANY IMPROVEMENT OF THE ECONOMY IS NOT LIKELY TO BE CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE BY THE MAY 4 NRW ELECTION. IT IS POSSIBLE, HE WRITES, THAT THE CDU WILL BE VICTORIOUS AND REPLACE THE SPD/FDP COALITION GOVERNMENT IN NRW. IF THIS IS THE CASE, ZUNDEL WRITES, WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES?

3. A CDU VICTORY IN NRW WOULD CHANGE THE MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF THE CDU IN THE BUNDESTAG-BUNDESRAT CONFERENCE COMMITTEE BUT WOULD NOT FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE POWER RELATIONSHIP (I.E., THE CDU/CSU ALREADY HAS A SLIGHT MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT WHICH IS SUFFICIENT TO BLOCK BUNDESTAG LEGISLATION THAT REQUIRES BUNDESRAT APPROVAL BUT NOT THE BULK OF LEGISLATION THAT REQUIRES ONLY THAT THE BUNDESRAT BE CONSULTED).

4. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW NATIONAL ELECTION SHOULD THE SPD SUFFER A SEVERE DEFEAT IN NRW, ZUNDEL WRITES THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO BASE SUCH A PRESUMPTION ON THE EXPERIENCE IN 1966 WHEN THE CDU LOSSES IN THE NRW ELECTION CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALL OF THE ERHARD GOVERNMENT. AT THAT TIME, ZUNDEL WRITES, ERHARD HAD LOST THE CONFIDENCE OF THE GERMAN VOTING PUBLIC AND HIS OWN PARTY. SCHMIDT, ON THE OTHER HAND, REMAINS POPULAR IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE, AND ALTHOUGH MANY SPD LEADERS HAVE NO AFFECTION FOR THE CHANCELLOR, HE IS RESPECTED.

5. ZUNDEL ALSO RULES OUT AN FDP/CDU COALITION GIVEN STATEMENTS BY PARTY LEADER GENSCHER AND FINANCE MINISTER FRIDERICHES THAT THE COALITION WITH THE SPD WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE 1976 ELECTIONS. AN ABRUPT CHANGE, THE JOURNALIST WRITES, AS A RESULT OF PANIC SHOULD THE FDP FAIL TO OBTAIN FIVE PERCENT IN NRW WOULD BE A CERTAIN ROAD TO POLITICAL SUICIDE FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY. ONLY IN THE BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS WILL THE COALITION PARTNERS BE IN A POSITION TO CAMPAIGN

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ON THEIR NATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

6. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ARTICLE ZUNDEL DOES ADMIT THAT CERTAIN DEVELOPMENTS COULD ALTER THE SITUATION. (1) A WORLD-WIDE DEPRESSION COULD HINDER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM, (2) SETBACKS IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS COULD MAKE LIBERAL PARTY REACTIONS UNPREDICTABLE, AND (3) SEVERE DEFEATS FOR THE SPD IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS COULD CREATE OPPOSITION TO SCHMIDT WITHIN THE SPD. A COMBINATION OF THESE THREE FACTORS, HE ADMITS, WOULD BE FATAL FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. WHAT WILL BE DECISIVE FOR THE COALITION, HE CONCLUDES, WILL BE IF IT HAS THE POWER AND THE

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DISCIPLINE TO CARRY THROUGH THE DIFFICULT PERIOD AHEAD. "THE TEAM IN THE GOVERNMENT BOAT," HE WRITES, "NEED NOT BE AFRAID OF THE HURRICANE SO LONG AS THEY.. .BAIL OUT THE BOAT AND HOLD TO THEIR COURSE." END

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7. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: ZUNDEL'S ARTICLE SEEMS TO THE EMBASSY TO BE A REALISTIC AND BALANCED ASSESSMENT. MUCH OF THE TALK LATELY ABOUT DRASTIC POLITICAL CHANGES IS, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME

BEING, PURE SPECULATION AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY. HOWEVER, RATIONALITY IN POLITICS IS NOT ALWAYS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE AND PANIC, ESPECIALLY ON THE PART OF THE FDP IF IT FALLS BELOW FIVE PERCENT IN NRW, COULD CREATE AN "EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF" MENTALITY THAT COULD PRODUCE SUDDEN, UNPREDICTABLE POLITICAL MOVES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BONN00613
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750014-0239
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750155/aaaabvy.a.tel
Line Count: 177
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 MAY 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <30 MAY 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: "DIE ZEIT" ARTICLE ON ASSESSMENT OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PINT, GE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006